A Conspiracy of Ravens

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A Conspiracy of Ravens

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Summary

Finding your familiar was like winning a lottery ticket, sometimes quite literally. Anyone showing a tendency towards magic, at any age, immediately found themselves thrust into the upper echelons of society and all the perks that came with that.

In a world where magic and non-magic folk live alongside each other without issue, some gifts are more useful than others. And some are downright dangerous.

Notes

For a lovely friend who asked for a sugar daddy AU and who let us run wild with another idea and include magic in it as well! We had so much fun :D

Check out the gorgeous art and text post that inspired a lot of the magical mythos in this fic.

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

A conspiracy started following Will around just before he graduated high school.

Three ravens, sometimes four, would hang out in the tree branches above Will's head when he sat on the school lawn reading a book. At first, he'd assumed it was a strange natural phenomenon; the birds weren't uncommon in the area, and certainly not endangered. But it was still a novel sight to have such large birds so close to the students of Will's high school.

They didn't seem to be afraid of people, in fact, they seemed not to notice them at all unless it was Will Graham. For a while, Will wondered if maybe he was the only one who could even see them, but that theory bit the dust the first time someone called out in surprise and pointed to the birds.

Real, then. Or, real enough.

Familiars were classed as a subcategory of living creatures, as they tended to transcend this world and whatever others existed around humanity at any given time. Will had heard of them, of course. Everyone had. Finding your familiar was like winning a lottery ticket, sometimes quite literally. Anyone showing a tendency towards magic, at any age, immediately found themselves thrust into the upper echelons of society and all the perks that came with that.

Will had known a couple of kids who had presented younger than he had, but none had been in his year. It wasn't uncommon for puberty to spark something magical in a person, but that wasn't the only time it happened. Times of great stress were known to bring magic out in a person. Times of need always showed an uptick in magical presentation. It was almost as though there was a shared subconscious somewhere that dictated when and how magic needed to be present and randomly chose someone to fill the gap.

This time, it had been Will.

After three weeks of being followed about, and now absolutely certain that the creatures weren't random wildlife following Will like some absurd Disney prince, the young man decided to put his name forward for the next Veiled Prophet Ball - the closest thing that Louisiana had to a male debutante's magical debut. The older elite would be there, as well as those like Will; if he were lucky, he might find a mentor that evening, or at the very least figure out where to go to further his magical education alone - his father certainly wouldn't be able to pay for it, much as he desperately wanted to.

The last thing Will needed was to put his father out; the man had cared for and raised his son as best he could, and he had done a good job of it. Will wanted to spend his life paying the man back, not setting him further into debt.

And he couldn't just put it aside, forget it entirely. Magic, left unchecked, would only grow. It would bubble and build until it spilled over and left damage in its wake. Will was already beginning to feel the thrum of energy beneath his skin.

A woman met him at his front door one day, standing on his front porch in a deep purple dress with a slit up the side, looking entirely out of place on the crooked porch steps. She didn't introduce herself, nor did she accept Will's hand when he held it out.

"Will Graham?" She asked, and then caught his eyes with her own. She stared for an eon, and Will felt almost as if she was flaying the flesh from his bones by the time she finally looked away.

"Acceptable." She said. From her bag, she drew a thin cream envelope sealed with wax, unmistakable. "Dress accordingly. Arrive on time."

Will found himself nodding wordlessly as he took the invitation from her. There wasn't much else to say.

His father was incredibly proud of him. Will didn't know how to respond, exactly, since this wasn't something he'd gained by studying or working hard for it, he just *got* it.

"It's common it skips generations," his father said. "You're the first Graham that I know of, though, so that's something."

Maternal line, then. Curious. Will didn't know much about his mother's family. His father was family enough for him, and he'd had enough to deal with at school to bother putting much time or effort into seeking out possible cousins or half siblings.

The ball was around Christmas, two weeks, and Will had plenty of time to get ready and save up for a suit. In that time, he started to get more familiar with his familiars, as it were. And figure out what exactly he had that was magical.

There were, it seemed, four of them. All ravens. Sometimes they appeared together, other times individually. It was curious to Will that he could tell them apart, when they looked awfully similar. For a time, Will did nothing but sit with them, gently holding out his hands for the birds to land on. They were heavy, warm, things that for all intents and purposes were entirely *alive* , but Will wasn't sure if that term could be applied to them accurately. They were happy to keep his company, and his father's, and seemed not at all disturbed by the dogs in the house either.

The dogs had no qualms with the strange beings themselves, though they were wary of them. Will noticed that the dogs would come near, but never allow the ravens to touch them or land on them, as though they were worried something would happen if they did.

Will started a checklist to discount the stereotypical magical manifestations within himself and worked his way through it like one would a bucket list. No telepathy or telekinesis, a pity, but not surprising. His strength hadn't grown. Water, fire, and earth didn't seem to care if he turned his hands and moved his fingers near them, so not elemental magic either. When he asked the ravens, they just tilted their heads, attentive and curious, but infuriatingly silent.

"Can you guys talk?" Will asked once, out of boredom, mostly.

"Yes," one said. The others just nodded. He didn't get more out of them after that.

They liked to watch, to listen, but they had not come to give him answers. And as the days passed, Will began to worry.

If this was all the magic he had, then what? If he could never call on anything else, did it still matter? Could he be trained, taken under someone's wing?

Was he some sort of fluke? Something mundane, with just a bit of glitter sprinkled over it?

It hit him only a day before the Ball, and when it did, it nearly bowled him over.

The body had been found down an alleyway Will passed daily. It had been all over the news. They'd found only pieces of the man, scattered and badly mangled. Will's father had been reluctant to see him leave the house again, worried something might befall Will as well.

Will, though, Will had been curious. He couldn't help himself; he was always curious. There was something about it that called to him, something that whispered in the back of his mind.

The alleyway had been marked off with police tape, but Will walked a seldom-trafficked route to work, and there was no one around to see when he ducked under it. Not to touch anything. Just to look.

His footsteps echoed off the walls. They echoed so *loudly* , ringing in his ears and making his teeth ache. Over and over.

Not his footsteps.

He had stopped moving. But someone, *someone* was walking. Had been walking. Calm and collected, without a care in the world.

Will closed his eyes, shaking his head to clear it, and found that he could still see, though what he was looking at was moving. It was still the street, but a skewed version of it. A different angle from where Will was standing, and higher up - as though he were a foot taller looking down. The footsteps slowed as they neared a dumpster, and Will saw a form, cowering and small, hands out to -

A raven landed on Will's shoulder and he cried out in panic, hand to his chest to keep his heart from beating through it. The alley in front of him was empty. He was still standing where he'd stopped. He swallowed. He could see the dumpster from where he stood, but not beyond it, and nothing in the world could make him step closer.

"Hello?"

Silence. Will was trembling. His hands were sweating. His entire body felt like it was electrified.

"Is anyone there?"

"Not anymore," the raven commented quietly as his brother settled on Will's other shoulder. A cursory glance informed Will that the other two were sat at the mouth of the alley, looking in.

Not anymore . Meaning… meaning there had been once, and Will had seen it, seen it as though -

“Did I see -?”

“You saw,” another confirmed, shifting against Will’s cheek before taking off and sitting on an overhang instead. Will felt sick. He didn’t want this kind of magic. He didn’t know what to do with it. He decided to go home, unsure if he could face people just then. One raven rode on his shoulder all the way back, the other three had disappeared.

He almost didn’t sleep that night. Nerves and horror flickered nauseatingly through him. He spent long moments staring at the ceiling, drawing in slow breaths and trying to soothe himself. The ravens had gone, as they sometimes did when he was meant to have no need of them. It was only Will, alone with his thoughts. With the rush of foreign memory racing through his mind.

And when he slept…

When he slept, he was taller, broader. Walking slowly down an alleyway. Staring down at his victim, calm, unmoved.

Blood and blood and blood *and-*

Will woke sweating and gasping. His father stared at him from the doorway, concern marring his features.

“You’re meant to be pickin’ up that suit,” he reminded Will. He sounded apologetic, but Will was grateful to be woken. There were less shadows clinging to him in the daytime.

“Thanks dad, I got it,” he offered a smile he knew his father wouldn’t believe was genuine. “Just a bad dream. Just nervous I guess.”

His father nodded and tapped the door jamb with the flat of his hand before leaving Will be. Both knew it wasn’t just nerves. Will had faced nerves before, the nightmares were new.

Will showered and forced himself to eat something for breakfast. The dogs milling around his legs calmed him down, and seeing his ravens beyond the window was a relief. By the time he left the house, he felt a little better. Will stopped by a barber’s for a proper hair cut, picked up the suit he’d rented for the evening and made his way back home.

His dad would be out doing a house call for an old friend of his and wouldn’t see Will off, but he’d left a note. Will tucked it into his inside pocket for good luck.

The suit wasn’t black, but charcoal grey. The lining and tie the color of a cloudy morning. Will checked he had his invitation, checked once more that he looked alright, and with a deep breath left the house. A raven immediately alighted on his shoulder.

“Which way?” Will asked.

“You know,” the bird told him. Will snorted and gently stroked the bird’s chest.

“Not much help are you?” He mumbled, but it was fond. The bird preened and blinked at Will with its beady black eyes. “Will you guys ride in the cab with me?”

It was as much a question as a genuine request, and the raven looked at Will a long time before clicking its beak and ducking its head in a nod. One would, at least.

By the time the cab pulled up at an actual bloody castle, Will had learned the intricacies of bird grooming. His familiar instructed him with quiet clicks and chirps as Will drew his fingers through his feathers, soothing and smoothing them. It was meditative, almost therapeutic; enough that he didn’t want to stop. But… he was here. He had to go in.

His invitation was taken at the door by a man who bowed low and offered Will a pleasant greeting. “The ceremonies will start within the hour, the dinner will follow. Until then, please partake in the food and drink available.”

“Thanks.”

Will didn’t know what to expect. He fidgeted. His familiar was joined by his brother and two birds rode on his shoulders as he entered the grand hall that quite truly lived up to its name. It was enormous. People ranging in ages from children to the almost-ancient mingled together. Among the group, others with animal familiars, some that flickered and disappeared before reappearing again, others that sat upon shoulders or in arms like Will’s did.

He was glad to see people pressed up against the walls, as unwilling to be social as Will was, and he joined them without a word.

One of the ravens prodded at a curl with his beak. “Talk,” it demanded. None of the birds were particularly talkative themselves, but they seemed to think Will’s reluctance to socialize was a personal affront.

“Soon,” Will promised, jiggling his shoulder when the bird took another nip at his hair. Truthfully, he didn’t know what to say. How to approach any of these people, most of whom had lived with magic their whole lives.

Hi, I became a serial killing maniac just by standing where he’d stood.

Yeah, that was reassuring.

The birds eventually gave up, vanishing. He couldn’t say he missed the pecking, but the weight on his shoulders had been comforting. Without his familiars, he felt even more out of place, staring out into a sea of strangers, all more powerful and competent than he was.

“Does this belong to you?” The voice was smooth, softly accented. When Will turned, he saw a tall, blond man in a three piece suit. On the man’s shoulder was a raven, looking incredibly pleased with itself, if a bird could make such an expression.

Will swallowed. “I’m so sorry, sir,” he managed. “I’ve only had them a few weeks I still don’t know how they… listen. Or don’t.” Will brought a hand up to tug his hair and dropped it just as quickly, not wanting to mess it up. “I hope he wasn’t too disruptive.”

“What’s his name?” the man asked, seemingly undisturbed by the raven still perching on him. Will blushed.

“Which one?” He offered, before laughing nervously. “There are four, sometimes. I haven’t seen more but… I’m not sure if it’s just one familiar or several.”

“You should ask him,” the man replied, offering Will a smile, and Will nodded, shrugging, embarrassed that it hadn’t occurred to him before. The other seemed not at all put off by Will’s shyness. He held out his hand. “Doctor Hannibal Lecter,” he said. “Forty years magically gifted.”

Will almost swallowed his tongue. “Will Graham,” he offered back. “Uh… three weeks.”

“The first few months are the most discombobulating,” Hannibal assured him, clasping his hands before him once Will let him go. “Have you discovered your gifts yet? Or are they similarly enigmatic?”

Will flushed. He reached for the raven, for lack of anything else to do with his hands. The bird settled onto his shoulder when coaxed, primly smoothing out its feathers, its work done.

“They’ve been… *elusive* ,” he finally said. “I’m not sure I entirely understand. I’ve only had one major breakthrough, and…”

blood and blood and blood

“And it wasn’t very illuminating,” Will finished lamely.

Hannibal nodded. “I struggled for a long time with my own gifts, but things will eventually settle for you.”

“What do you do?” Will asked.

Hannibal smiled. He spread his hands in front of him. A coin bounced from palm to palm, though Hannibal’s hands remained still. “I can’t move anything *excessively* large, but my strength has improved over the years.”

Will’s smile was wide, despite himself, and he met Hannibal’s eyes properly for the first time that evening. They were deep, dark, lovely. Will felt soothed just looking at them.

“I wish mine involved movement.”

“Perhaps it does,” Hannibal shrugged, letting his eyes skim the rest of the gathered magical community around them. “Shall we find out together?”

Will blinked at him dumbly. Was it really as simple as that? Didn’t he have to pass some sort of test? Be scrutinized by hundreds of people? Proven entirely not worthy before someone who had no one else stepped up to claim him?

“Unless you already have someone interested in nurturing your gifts,” the doctor added, when Will didn’t immediately reply.

“No,” Will shook his head, his cheek brushing up against his familiar’s warm side. “No, no one. I’ve… I’d only just arrived. If my familiar hadn’t disturbed you -”

“He hardly disturbed,” Hannibal assured him. “Oftimes they know better than we do what we need.”

Will nodded helplessly, and found himself smiling again. “I’d like that. I’ll do my best to live up to your high expectations.”

“Have I high expectations?” Hannibal tilted his head, and Will felt his cheeks warm. God. He needed to just stop talking, before he effectively convinced his only chance at a good life to leave and forget he ever saw him.

“I never push beyond what a young magician can handle,” Hannibal soothed him, “I’m invested in *your* success, I’ve achieved my own. Perhaps we can talk after the ceremony, at dinner.” He cast his eyes to the raven on Will’s shoulder. “Your familiar will find me.”

Will nodded, not trusting himself to speak again.

The raven did find Hannibal again, after the ceremony. The doctor sat beside Will at dinner, detailing plans, assuring Will of his desire to mentor him.

Will had known what mentorship might entail, of course, but he still found himself completely overwhelmed when, shortly after his high school graduation, he packed his bags and said goodbye to his father. He’d always planned on going to college, and Hannibal assured him he still would, eventually, but for now, he was moving in with a stranger to learn *magic* . It felt like he’d fallen into another world. Just a few months ago he’d just been Will Graham. Now… Now he didn’t know who he was.

Sometimes literally.

His gift had stretched its wings a few more times since the alley. Sometimes innocuous moments. His father in the kitchen getting coffee. Sometimes darker things. Assaults, muggings, murders. He saw them on his walk to school, he lived them in his dreams.

What was he going to tell Hannibal?

At least he’d figured out how to communicate with his familiars better. There *were* four of them, he found out. By asking, incidentally. He hadn’t named them yet because he’d asked them to do it themselves. For all he knew, they had been around for millenia and had had countless magicians to follow about. He didn’t want to do them the disservice of naming them something stupid.

He also understood that they were part of him as surely as they were their own creatures entirely. It was hard to explain. Magic was hard to explain.

Hannibal had gifted Will a set of history books pertaining to magic and he’d been devouring them. He had one in his lap as the cab drove on and on, taking him further from home and closer to where he would live for the next… however long. Hannibal had offered to house

and care for Will while he started his magical education, and Will had graciously taken him up on the offer. Without a job, he had no means of his own to pay for an apartment.

It wasn't uncommon for mentors and mentees to live together, but Will still found himself blushing at the thought.

When the cab pulled up before an enormous house, Will swallowed and opened the door. One of the ravens was seated on top of the cab, two more on the steps leading up to the front door. The fourth one… Will wasn't sure. Sometimes they only showed up in pairs or threes. He thanked the driver, tugged his duffel bag up his shoulder and made his way to the place he would call his home from now on.

"Will," Hannibal opened the door with a smile, gesturing for Will to come in. "I'm glad to see you."

The fourth raven was seated on his shoulder, pleased as punch.

"It's good to see you too," Will said, faintly flushed as he reached out to take the bird from Hannibal. "If I didn't know any better," he muttered to the raven, "I'd say you were *his* familiar."

"No," the raven said, giving Will a dour look before flickering out of sight, along with his brothers.

"I have no control over them," Will told Hannibal apologetically.

"They do what they will," Hannibal assured him. "You needn't worry. I'm very used to wayward creatures."

Will gave the entryway a cursory glance. He hadn't seen Hannibal's familiar at the ball, and it seemed he wouldn't see it today, either. Hannibal took up Will's bag, brushing off Will's flustered attempts to take it back.

"Allow me to show you to your room."

Will followed.

The house was open and large, much too big for someone living alone, but Will would be the last to point that out. The room Hannibal had prepared for Will was huge; a queen bed with a headboard, a large desk by the window, bookcases already half filled with books, a heavy wardrobe. Another door led through to a bathroom.

"I'm afraid it's one we share," Hannibal said, when Will looked askance. "But I'll be certain to never invade your privacy."

Will blushed, and nodded.

After, Hannibal led Will through the rest of the place. Showed him his personal study, the library, the drawing room, the sitting room. There were musical instruments, paintings, and

statues all about the place. Sigils drawn or made from twine or branches occasionally occupied the space between books cases.

There were candles. Old lamps. Buckets of pens and quills. Inks.

Will laughed when he noticed Hannibal's tablet. "Sorry," he shook his head. "It just doesn't seem to fit."

"I'll admit I do prefer a rather stereotypical aesthetic when it comes to my workplaces."

"No, it's… it's nice. Thank you."

Will eventually settled on a stool at the kitchen bar while Hannibal set about making something to eat.

"As you're aware, magic comes in too many forms for it to be schooled in an institution," Hannibal was saying, "so I will guide you through the basics of energy control, emotional management, understanding your own power."

He turned to look at Will as the other sat and listened, a smile on his face despite himself. One of the ravens had returned and was pacing the breakfast bar, investigating it for possible snacks.

"I will encourage you to grow, as your powers make themselves clear to you. I hope you'll trust me and be open with your progress."

It was as if he knew what Will was hiding. Will focused on not turning away, knowing it would make him look guilty.

"I don't know what I'm doing," he said, "but I'll try my best."

"We are all of us beginners, at one point," Hannibal told him. He slid a plate before Will, a hearty breakfast that made Will's stomach grumble with its scent. "Some of us have the advantage of time. Do not measure yourself against others. Improvement comes from challenging your own skills."

Will ducked his head, prodding nervously at his eggs. The raven hopped closer, giving him a pointed look.

"Oh no you don't," Will grumbled. "If I give you any, you'll brag to the others, and then everyone will want some. Not again."

"There's plenty to go around," Hannibal assured him, offering the bird a bite from his own plate.

As Will predicted, the others showed up in short order demanding snacks of their own, and Will relented, offering his plate to the inquisitive creatures. They were polite things, didn't make a mess of Will's plate or nip at Hannibal's fingers. When they sated themselves, they jumped from the bench to explore the rest of the house - on foot, amusingly, none of them took wing. Will winced a little and turned to Hannibal again.

“Don’t apologize,” Hannibal reminded him. “You’ve an inquisitive mind, they are part of it. Let them roam.”

“I don’t… I don’t want to overstep.”

“This is your home, Will, outside of my bedroom, you are welcome to explore it.”

Will nodded again, grateful and quiet. Hannibal considered him a moment.

“You remind me a lot of my sister,” he said after a while. “She too was quiet, always apologizing for her gifts when she needn’t have.”

“What does her magic allow her to do?”

“Allowed,” Hannibal gently amended, catching Will’s eye and holding up a placating hand to assure him he hadn’t caused offense. “It didn’t develop to its full strength. But it was similar to mine. Movement, certain form shifting. She always feared it would manifest in full transfiguration, she feared it would make her a monster.”

She sounded young. It was the terror of a child, of someone who did not quite understand how magic worked.

It was the same fear Will held locked inside him, feeling barely out of childhood himself.

“People can be monsters without any magic,” he said softly. He looked down at his plate, shifting the remnants around with his fork.

“Humanity is a vast species,” Hannibal agreed.

After a moment, Will ventured another thought. “Magic… it can be a little bit scary,” he admitted. “I… see things, sometimes. Moments I didn’t witness, through other people’s eyes. I think it’s worse with stronger emotions, and not all emotions are positive.”

“Empathy,” Hannibal said. “Seeing from someone else’s point of view in a more literal sense. Have you seen things that worry you, Will?”

Will nodded quickly, shrugging. One of the ravens returned to perch on his knee and he stroked gently over his feathers. The bird blinked at him languidly and Will sighed.

“The first time, I was walking past a crime scene,” he admitted. “It was cleared already and, I didn’t touch anything but suddenly I was… walking, I was taller. I could see the man that -” Will chewed his lip before looking up at Hannibal apologetically.

“Has it happened again since?” Hannibal asked him.

“Once or twice,” Will admitted, “sometimes really simple things. Dad making coffee. Sometimes worse things. Darker… dark things. I had to stop taking the shortcut past the courthouse after a while.”

“Emotions are energy,” Hannibal said. “And energy is power, you know this. Until you learn to control your gift, it will latch on to anything giving off strength and draw you to it.”

“It feels,” Will held his breath a moment and shrugged, the bird on his leg ruffled its feathers and leaned its heavy warmth against Will’s stomach. Will laughed breathlessly and shook his head. “It doesn’t feel like magic. I can’t do anything, I just see.”

“Seeing is invaluable, Will,” Hannibal told him, bending near to rest on the breakfast bar, closer to Will. “Sometimes, all one needs is to be seen, and understood, for a monster to become a man again.”

Will bit his lip but nodded. “I hope so.”

“I know so,” Hannibal countered, amused, before taking Will’s plate and offering his familiar a narrow-eyed smile. “Now, lessons will begin slowly, but they will begin. Tell me how you’re sleeping.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

He could do better.

He wanted to do better.

Three weeks after dinner, Will met Hannibal at the door with a wide smile. "I need to ask you something."

Chapter Notes

Things are heating up!

Will's routine had not varied much since moving into Hannibal's home.

He woke early, made his bed. Sometimes the ravens were about, sometimes not; he'd started leaving the window open a crack for them to come and go, though he knew they could disappear and reappear wherever they wanted at will. Two of them used it, the other two pointedly refused.

After that, Will brushed his teeth and dressed.

He and Hannibal took breakfast together, drank coffee, talked. When Hannibal had work - he offered his magical services to certain hospitals as a healer, for cases where normal medicine wouldn't suffice - Will had his studies. He was surprised to learn that a lot of magic was meditation as well as study. He practiced keeping his emotions in check, practiced reaching out to sense those of others.

Some days he would walk to the nearest park and sit down, closing his eyes and letting his other senses guide him. He didn't do anything beyond find the outline between one person and another, where one energy ended and another began.

Some days he would walk through the space and wait for a trail to cling to him. He was still assaulted by the overwhelming emotional outbursts of others, but he knew how to control himself now, and not fall head over feet right into someone's flashback.

He called his dad every day.

On days Hannibal wasn't working, they studied together. The man was incredibly knowledgeable on the subject of magical history, both American and European. He helped Will hone his concentration, listened carefully to Will's experiences and offered his own when pertinent.

He also fed him elaborate meals, bought Will books and materials for his studies, magical and otherwise. He even bought him clothes.

"I thought you'd enjoy an outing," Hannibal said, offering Will the drycleaning bag with a flourish. "Somewhere you needn't irritate your powers with negative emotions."

Will took the bag in hesitant hands. "I have a suit," he offered.

"And now you have another." Hannibal's smile was unbothered. "As you should. You should have several, for a variety of occasions."

Will tried to imagine owning *several* suits and failed miserably. He twisted his face into something like gratitude, he hoped.

"You don't have to do these things for me," he said. "You're already doing so much."

"I do nothing I don't wish to," Hannibal assured him. "Go. Change."

Will went. He changed. He attempted to tame his curls into something sensible and decent. He mostly succeeded.

This suit was a deep, navy blue, so dark as to be nearly black. The white of Will's shirt stood out distinctly, as did the glint of silver cuff links that Hannibal had supplied. He felt overdressed, but only until he saw Hannibal and remembered Hannibal was perpetually overdressed.

"Dinner?" Hannibal said, extending his arm.

Will blushed and took it.

It had been a few months now that he had lived with Hannibal; he'd turned nineteen in that time, had started to allow his mind to open further to the magic scratching at the back door of his thoughts. He had still not seen Hannibal's familiar, though he had heard the doctor speak with it once or twice when he was in the bathroom late at night. He had also not seen the extent of Hannibal's magic, though he supposed that was up to the magician to show, and not part of a magical education.

He had also, to his absolute despair, started to hone a painful crush on his mentor.

The ravens hardly helped - one was always perching on Hannibal's shoulder if it was near, and nothing Will said in private made the creatures stop. They sat preening by the doctor's face, seemingly content to be so close to him when Will wanted to be. And the doctor didn't mind; he had never once shooed the things from his space. In fact, he offered them food from his hand, stroked their feathers, gently touched their claws and beaks.

Will imagined those touches against his cheek.

Now, as they walked out to the car, Will allowed himself to lean a little more into Hannibal before they parted to get into the vehicle.

Dinner ended up being in a large garden, with live music. Magical and non magical people mingled together, listening to the soft plucking of fingers against a harp. Will sighed. It was the first time in a long time he didn't feel immediately yanked one way or another by someone's left-behind emotions. He gave Hannibal a grateful look.

"Do your powers ever make you feel so tired?" He asked, only half joking. He had never seen Hannibal anything less than absolutely put together and perfect, he wasn't sure the man was capable of being tired.

"Moreso when I was younger," Hannibal said, "but they are occasionally wearying, even now. That exhaustion will slowly ease, with practice."

Will sighed. Most of Hannibal's placating phrases ended in "with practice." It was beginning to feel as though Will's entire life was to be practice.

But then, it hadn't been terrible, so far. He spent quite a bit of time with Hannibal, and that was hard to argue with.

Will was too young to drink in the state of Maryland, but that had never stopped Hannibal at meals, and now he somehow managed to acquire wine for them both, raising his glass towards Will with a pleased smile. The wine was light and sweet. It brought warmth to Will's cheeks. He could almost understand Hannibal's obsession, the more types he tried.

It was safe here, soft. If Will closed his eyes and stretched himself outwards, he saw only shared meals and muted delight. The occasional grumble of a waiter, but even that was rare. He opened his eyes to smile back at Hannibal.

"I like it," Will said.

Hannibal's smile warmed Will to the core. He wanted to be the cause of that smile, to be the cause of Hannibal's pleasure and pride. He wanted to give back more than he had been - which, to Will's mind, had thus far been nothing at all. Hannibal clothed and fed him, tutored and guided him, and Will slept in his house and ate his food and stumbled along his own awkward discoveries.

He could do better.

He wanted to do better.

Three weeks after dinner, Will met Hannibal at the door with a wide smile. "I need to ask you something."

The doctor followed, curious, after hanging up his coat, and took a seat in the drawing room opposite Will in the high-back chairs by the fireplace there.

“This morning,” Will dove in without preamble. “When you left, you drove your usual route but stopped at an intersection you rarely hit a red light on. And the first patient you saw was an elderly woman you’ve a fondness for, because you’ve seen her often, but you’re not sure you can help her. She’s not magical, is she? But she appreciates that you are.” Will was grinning, almost bouncing in his excitement as Hannibal watched, head tilting and brow rising curiously.

“You’re quite right, she never felt the calling to it,” Hannibal murmured, crossing one leg over the other and setting his clasped hands on his knee. “What’s her name, Will?”

“Alma? Or Ella, I couldn’t quite make it out,” Will bit his lip and ducked his head. “I found a way to maintain concentration on a trail. On a trail that isn’t fuelled by strong emotions.”

“Oh?” Hannibal smiled.

“Emotion is energy, and energy is power,” Will repeated - words Hannibal often told him again and again when he felt himself powerless or incompetent as he worked. “If I flood the line with my own emotions, the images are stronger, I can hear things as well as see them. I’m not sure if any other senses would ever come up but… it’s more than I had before.”

“What emotions do you draw from, Will?”

Here, the boy stuttered a little, biting his lip again and shrugging, pulling back and trying to close himself up. From that alone, Hannibal could guess, but he wanted Will open, unashamed. He patiently waited, gave no indication that he would offer Will an easy way out, and finally the boy cracked.

“Arousal,” Will breathed, the word so quiet between them it was almost not there at all.

Hannibal tilted his head. Curiosity tugged at him, the word confirming a suspicion he’d long held.

“And what brought you to this conclusion?” He asked, low, quiet.

Will flushed. He struggled to meet Hannibal’s gaze, but when he did, his pupils were blown wide. There was arousal in him now, Hannibal could sense it. Embarrassed arousal, but it was still there.

“A dream,” Will murmured. “I woke from a dream, and followed the trail to you. You were in the kitchen, starting breakfast. I knew the recipe, for a moment. I lost it pretty quickly, but it was so *vivid* .”

Remarkable, dangerous boy. “You get stronger every day,” Hannibal said. “You should practice again tomorrow. Tell me what you see.”

Will’s cheeks flooded with color once more but he nodded, a helpless smile on his face as he looked at his mentor. Hannibal tucked his chin against his chest and gave Will an amused look.

“Her name is Alma,” he confirmed after a moment, Will’s laugh was bright and loud in the room.

For the next few weeks, Will went about his usual routine, but now when Hannibal left the house, Will closed his eyes and left with him. He kept pace with Hannibal’s long strides, sat with him in the front seat of the Bentley as he drove to work, or made house calls.

Some days it was easier, Will’s entire body thrummed with need and being near Hannibal, even by following the slipstream of his shadow, kept him absolutely immersed in this activity. Other days he was too tired to do more than trail the man out the door, losing him as soon as Hannibal pulled away from the sidewalk.

On those days, Will went to the park and practiced his meditations again. Using his displeasure with himself, his anger at himself to concentrate on trails there, and follow those.

The ravens were around more and more often, now. Will would fall asleep to at least two in his room and wake up to all four of them preening or flexing their wings by the window.

As his skills in tracking - he supposed that was the closest his magic came to explanation - improved, the birds spoke more often, encouraging him and offering new things for him to try.

“See,” one told him, and took off from Will’s shoulder, up high into the clouds. Will kept his eyes on the bird before closing them, and found that the earth was growing smaller and smaller beneath him and he was lightheaded with how near the clouds were.

The first time he’d done that he’d nearly thrown up, falling back into himself too quickly. After that, he’d started practicing with his birds more often, at first waiting for their permission to look through their eyes, and then slipping from one to the other when they were nearby. They were part of him, after all, his eyes were their eyes, their wings his wings.

He never spied, only practiced, but even about the house Will found himself slipping into and out of his familiars when they disappeared to another room, or wandered off into the garden to perch in the trees.

And he continued to follow Hannibal. Every morning, when he left. Every evening if he could catch the barest whiff of a trail. He found he could, and more than a whiff, when he was particularly invested in his arousal, with Hannibal in the starring role of his fantasies.

He never touched himself in these moments, following his arousal but not indulging it, and he paid for it when he slept. In his dreams, Hannibal was all over him, big hands on Will’s body, caressing him, moving him as he willed.

Will woke sticky more often than not. He spent evenings curled around a pillow, achingly hard as he let himself follow Hannibal through his night.

And then.

And then one morning, he woke hard and aching, and reached out to find Hannibal in the shower. Hannibal in the shower, one hand wrapped around himself, and oh, this was inappropriate, it was invasive, Will should have left immediately.

Will.

The thought was so strong, so concrete, that it pulled Will's focus apart. Hannibal's orgasm ricocheted through them, and Will fell back into himself with a loud cry, echoing in the room and no doubt heard in the bathroom, as he jerked and writhed through his own unexpected climax.

God, *God* it felt good, it felt so good and Will was shaking with it. He would need to shower after Hannibal was finished, would need to clean himself up, find a way to explain his exclamation as a dream, nothing more.

But it could be more…

It could be more.

Will waited until Hannibal turned off the shower. He waited until he heard the man close the door that led into his room and pushed himself up to step into the bathroom instead. The steam enveloped Will quickly and he sighed, bringing a hand to his eyes to rub them as he forced himself not to immediately cling to the trail Hannibal had left behind him. It was emotionally charged, and Will was trembling with his own surge of energy and it was tempting, it was so tempting…

Before him, Hannibal's bedroom, masculine and tidy, the folds of a towel as Hannibal removed it and tossed it to the bed. Gaze down, just enough to tease, just enough to glimpse, and then up, catching Hannibal's reflection in a full-length mirror. He lifted a hand, crooked his finger -

"Shit," Will swallowed, pressing his shoulders back against the bathroom door again. He was aching with need, he wanted to move so badly, to go to him, to reach out. Will tugged his underwear off and cleaned himself quickly with a damp towel, and then, new briefs pulled on to cover himself, he drew his knuckles up and down the door leading to Hannibal's room before knocking.

"Come in."

Hannibal was bare, still, his back to Will. Will hesitated in the doorway, as if somehow he had imagined the invitation.

But no, Hannibal's amused pleasure was still thick in the air. He'd done this on purpose, lured Will through a trail he knew Will would follow, and Will was breathless with anticipation.

"Did you sleep well?" Hannibal peered over his shoulder, smiling, *smirking.* He knew how Will had slept. He knew how Will found him, when he rose in the mornings and reached out for Hannibal.

“Yeah.” Will swallowed. His mouth was dry. Hannibal held out a hand, crooked his finger exactly as he had in the mirror. Will took a step forward. Another. Another. Until Hannibal could wrap a hand around his arm and pull him the last few inches.

“That was a very private moment you witnessed,” Hannibal murmured. “What’s to be done about that?”

“I-” The apology died in Will’s throat as Hannibal cupped his cheek. Eyes wide, lips parted, he froze as Hannibal’s mouth found his.

The kiss was gentle, chaste, sweet. Will’s breath tickled Hannibal’s lips when he pulled back and only then did the boy push up on his toes and initiate another. Hannibal was bare before him, and Will in just his briefs and a thin old tee shirt. It was intimate, electric, and when they broke to breathe the second time Will laughed helplessly and pressed their foreheads together.

“I didn’t mean to look,” he admitted. “I woke almost feverish and immediately reached out because if something had happened to you, if something -”

“Sweet boy,” Hannibal stroked his knuckles up and down Will’s cheek before tucking them beneath his chin to lift it. “I’m right here.”

“I know,” Will bit his lip, eyes down to Hannibal’s mouth. “I know, and I’d wondered, often, and hoped just as much, and -”

And Hannibal kissed him again. Will melted into it, hands spreading over Hannibal’s arms, body poised just near enough to feel the heat of him but not close enough to brush, to touch, to *feel* .

“Are you sure?” Will asked, his final sweet little attempt at diffusion. He wanted this, he had, for weeks and weeks, but he didn’t want his mentor to feel like he owed him this as well. He already gave Will so much.

Hannibal laughed, quiet and fond. He hooked a finger under Will’s chin again, tilting his head up. “I have been sure from the moment I saw you. I only waited to be sure you were ready.”

Will was ready. He thought surely he’d been ready for weeks now, reaching out to Hannibal as easily as breathing. He surged forward, stealing another kiss that Hannibal returned just as fiercely.

Hannibal’s hands found the hem of Will’s shirt, sliding underneath and up, warm against his spine. He tugged Will a little closer, and Will remembered that Hannibal was completely naked. He hadn’t yet stolen a peek, but when Hannibal pulled back to tug Will’s shirt off over his head, he glanced down and swallowed.

Hannibal was thick, reddened with blood, foreskin pulling back to reveal the slick head of his cock. Will wanted to touch. He wanted to *taste* .

He wanted to keep his own briefs *on* .

He'd never felt small, and he still didn't, but an almost childish shyness had overtaken him at the sight. He didn't know what he was doing. He didn't know what to do with his *hands*.

Suddenly he was panicking, excitement quick to shift to nerves, and when he clung to Hannibal the older man gentled a hand through his hair as he held him close, pressed chest to chest.

"Beautiful boy," he praised, "clever thing. You needn't do anything you don't want to. Ever."

"But I -"

"Ever," Hannibal assured him, cupping Will's cheek to make the boy look up again before kissing his forehead. Will closed his eyes and trembled a little, allowing his mind to slow down, his breathing to hitch and ease. He could feel Hannibal's arousal against his own and heat overrode the cool adrenaline in his blood once more.

He knew that should he pull away and leave, he would not be dragged back and forced. He knew that if he said no, Hannibal would not make him.

And that alone pushed Will to kiss him again, to open himself, vulnerable and lovely, once more for Hannibal's mouth to explore. He knew he needn't do anything he didn't want to, but he wanted this. He absolutely wanted this.

"Hannibal," he sighed, slipping a hand up into Hannibal's hair and pressing their foreheads together as he ducked his head to look between them; Hannibal's cock rubbing up against Will's own, leaving slick smears over the cotton. Will grinned, blushing deeply, and lifted his eyes to catch Hannibal's.

"Touch me?" He asked.

Hannibal had clearly been waiting for the invitation. One hand fit itself to the base of Will's spine, holding him safe and secure. The other teased just lightly at the waistband of Will's briefs, until Will huffed a laugh and squirmed in his arms.

"I'm ticklish," Will warned.

"I won't tease, then," Hannibal said. And he didn't. His hand slipped beneath the waistband, cupping Will where he was aching most.

Will sucked in a breath, pressing his forehead to Hannibal's shoulder. It gave him the perfect view of Hannibal's hand stretching the fabric as he wrapped a tight grip around Will's cock.

Will groaned, pleased and warm, and spread his own hand over Hannibal's arm, fingers clinging harder as the doctor started to stroke him up. God, it felt good. Will knew that he should be doing something as well, with his damn useless hands, touching Hannibal back, stroking him too, sinking to his knees to take him into his mouth, maybe, but he couldn't move, couldn't do anything beyond nuzzle harder against Hannibal's shoulder and moan softly.

“Tempting boy,” Hannibal purred against him, moving to cup the head of Will’s cock and tease in slow rubs until Will’s breathing picked up hot and quick against his bare skin. “Do you have any idea how distracting you are?”

Will laughed, helpless, and bit his lip.

Good.

Good.

He hadn’t been the only one wishing, waiting, hoping. He hadn’t been the only one aching. The realization gave him confidence, and Will shifted, just enough, to drop his hand and grasp Hannibal in a similarly tight grip as well.

“I hoped,” he admitted, smile spreading against Hannibal’s shoulder before his lips parted on a helpless little noise as Hannibal teased his thumb beneath the crown of Will’s cockhead.

Sex was an unfamiliar shadow, a hazy dream with blurry details, but everything Hannibal did to him had Will trembling. He did his best to imitate it, twisting his wrist, teasing at Hannibal’s foreskin with curious fingers.

Hannibal rewarded every exploration with a new sensation, until Will’s thighs were tense with the strain of holding himself still.

“If we keep this up, we’ll both end up on the floor,” Hannibal said. He slid his hands free of Will’s briefs, smiling at the noise of displeasure that spilled from Will’s lips.

“Don’t stop,” Will pleaded, but he pulled his own hand away as well, with some reluctance.

“I don’t intend to,” Hannibal promised him. He bent at the knee, just enough to haul Will up into his arms. He turned them both before Will could protest, spilling Will onto the bed and crawling between his thighs.

“Oh *fuck* ,” Will said with a laugh, yanking Hannibal up into another kiss.

It was easier here, to draw his knees up and wrap his legs around Hannibal, it was easier to arch up and feel Hannibal’s cock rub up against Will’s through the thin fabric of his underwear. Will drew his hands down Hannibal’s back and up again, slipping into his hair and holding him close.

He was so desperate already, so needy. He wasn’t sure he would be able to stay hard for long if Hannibal was going to fuck him.

God .

“I’m -”

“Beautiful,” Hannibal told him, moving to kiss beneath Will’s chin, down over his chest. He teased his tongue around a nipple before moving lower, catching the waistband of Will’s briefs to tug them down. As Will squirmed, Hannibal laid comfortably between his thighs and

licked a thick, hot line from the base of Will's cock to its tip, sucking the head into his mouth immediately after.

"Hannibal - *fuck* - "

Hannibal hummed, but said nothing, gently spreading a palm over Will's stomach to keep him still as he continued to tease. He could taste Will's need leaking slick over his tongue. He wanted to taste all of him, to devour the boy from the inside out, to worship every inch of his skin.

"I'm… *hnng* ," Will bit his lip and caught a hand in Hannibal's hair. He was going to come. He was about to. But not this soon, not yet…

"Stop." In response, Hannibal gave another firm, knee-shaking suck to the head, Will laughed breathlessly, tugging him up and off, his cock smacking wetly over his belly. "Stop," he said again, kissing the smile from Hannibal's lips. "I want this to last."

"We have more time," Hannibal assured him, his hands trailing possessively over Will's flanks. Will moaned at the thought. More time. Hours, *days,* even. Time to learn the curves and contours of Hannibal's body. Time to taste him.

Will brought his knees up, trapping Hannibal's hips between his thighs. "I don't want to beat you to the end," he said softly. "I want to get there together."

Hannibal nuzzled along Will's jaw. "Sweet boy," He murmured, lifting up to reach for the bedside table, "Ideally, I'd bring you relief as often as you could stand it."

Will laughed again, hiding his face in his hands. It was such a line, and coming from *Hannibal* , of all people. He shook his head and peered at Hannibal through his fingers.

"I just want *you* ," he said, painfully honest, and no way to take it back.

"You have me," the man promised, "in any way I can give myself to you."

Will believed him. He nodded. Hannibal smiled at Will like he'd given him the sun, and when he leaned in to kiss him again, he let one hand slip down between them to stroke gently behind Will's balls, over his smooth perineum, teasing over his hole.

Will made a helpless sound and tried to close his legs.

"Beautiful thing," Hannibal sighed, kissing his cheek. "We needn't do this now."

"I want to." Petulant, stubborn, proud. Hannibal adored him.

"Have you, before?"

"No," Will laughed again, blushing. "Never. Not yet."

Not yet . Clever boy.

"Shall I tease you breathless then?" Hannibal asked. "Bring you to shaking orgasm to relax you for this?"

Will closed his eyes and stuttered out a breath. For a moment, a flash of a second, he was looking down at himself. And then he was back, blinking up at Hannibal, wide eyed and needy.

“Not sure I could handle that,” he said. Not with arousal flooding them both.

“I won’t let you fall.”

Hannibal’s mouth found the center of his chest, trailing sucking kisses down, down, until he could lick once more at the head of Will’s cock.

Will felt like he was flying. He closed his eyes tight, rocking his hips helplessly towards the wet heat that teased him.

Hannibal moved slowly, drawing out Will’s gasps with a searching tongue.

Will felt the kind of energy surge through him that could guide him an entire day through someone else’s trails. He felt the kind of surge that made him feel electrified, like a livewire, like a machine

Hannibal’s mouth teased and tormented him, and then his fingers joined his probing tongue, cool and slick, and Will laughed, helpless. If he closed his eyes for too long, he saw himself from where Hannibal held him, and it was such a strange sensation, such a foreign sort of arousal, that Will immediately had to open his eyes again and remind himself that he was here, himself, being pleasured by a beautiful man who held power immeasurable.

“Please,” Will groaned, squirming against Hannibal, grinning when his lips ventured over his thighs while his fingers continued to stretch him open. “I want to feel you, please,”

Hannibal hummed and worked on Will a few moments more, taking his time to make sure it would be pleasurable, to make sure it would be the most incredible experience of Will’s young life so far.

There was only so much magic could help with that.

When he kissed Will again, the young man drew his knees up and wrapped his thighs around Hannibal with a smile. His stomach was a slick mess of precome and sweat, and his cheeks were dusted with a most fetching blush. He welcomed Hannibal into him with a groan and a bite to his lip, and gasped when the doctor found something within him that his fingers had only teased against.

Hannibal tilted his hips, aiming for that spot. Each new brush against it sent sparks of pleasure up Will’s spine, curling heat in his chest. He wrapped his hands around Hannibal’s biceps, clinging tight as they rocked together.

It was overwhelming. Too bright, too much, and every second sent Will flying higher and higher. He couldn’t have let go of Hannibal if he wanted to. They were tied together by

pleasure, and by the reaching hand of Will's magic.

Will didn't know which way was up. He saw Hannibal, and he saw himself, flushed red down to his chest and gasping with pleasure. He felt Hannibal wrap a hand around his cock, and felt the heat against his own palm as well. He hadn't lost control like this in months, not since Hannibal had begun to train him, but he couldn't bring himself to care. Pleasure burned bright in his veins, carving a path through Will that would mark him forever.

"Hannibal," Will gasped, " *Hannibal!"*

Hannibal's lips found his, teeth nipping at Will's lower lip and drawing moans from him.

"I can't-"

"Don't," Hannibal told him. "Come, Will. Let it feel good."

It felt good.

It felt absolutely perfect.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

One morning, meandering down the stairs with Hannibal's shirt draped over his otherwise bare form, Will found one of his familiars perched on the banister.

"Where've you been?" he asked, scratching gently beneath the bird's beak.

"Away."

"Of course," Will replied, amused. "Be safe."

"You too."

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After a week, Will no longer slept in his bedroom.

It was always open to him, of course, and his things remained within for him to use, but he found he preferred to be around Hannibal as often as he was allowed.

He was always allowed.

Hannibal doted on Will's body as he had doted on his mind all those months that their relationship was purely that of mentor and mentee. He encouraged Will to explore both his magic and his distinctly human pleasures with him, and Will did so, frequently and with relish.

When Hannibal was away, Will continued to develop his skills - following either Hannibal about his day or people in the park. He practiced further with his familiars as well, slipping into them to see through their eyes every few hours or so. Sometimes the things he saw were not from his world, and those Will avoided looking into further. One world was confusing enough without getting into parallel universes and meta-humanity.

His intimacy with Hannibal offered not only genuinely pleasurable experiences but it strengthened Will's magic. He could not only see and hear when he tracked someone, but he could touch things. Sometimes he could even pick them up.

He felt giddy.

He felt excited.

He felt, for the first time since the ravens had appeared in his life, truly worthy of being mentored by someone like Hannibal. He was proud of himself. He wanted Hannibal to be proud as well.

And he was that, certainly. He told Will verbally, he showed him with touches and nuzzles and sighs, he gifted Will presents. Will felt spoiled. He felt, some days, like a pretty kept boy.

He'd never admit it, but he absolutely did not mind that.

One morning, meandering down the stairs with Hannibal's shirt draped over his otherwise bare form, Will found one of his familiars perched on the banister.

"Where've you been?" he asked, scratching gently beneath the bird's beak.

"Away."

"Of course," Will replied, amused. "Be safe."

"You too."

He knew them more intimately than names, now, and he knew when this one flickered from view, there was mischief in his eyes, fixed right over Will's shoulder..

He had little time to contemplate that, before arms slipped around his waist, tugging him back against a firm chest.

"How am I to go about my day with you looking so tempting?"

Will laughed, tilting his head back to nuzzle at Hannibal's jaw. "Unwashed, uncombed, underdressed?"

"In my things," Hannibal corrected, returning the gentle nudges. "With the hem slipping up your thighs."

Will rolled his eyes, sinking back as Hannibal's hands trailed down his chest, undoing buttons as they went. "It's hardly the height of beauty."

"Perhaps. I've had my eye on some finer things for you." The shirt fell open, exposing Will from neck to groin. Hannibal sucked a bruise into Will's throat, stripping him there in the hall.

"I was going to have breakfast," Will complained half-heartedly.

"I'll bring it to you in bed." Teasing fingers found Will's nipples, pinching and tugging them into stiff peaks. Will bit his lip and grinned, even as goosebumps appeared on his skin and he squirmed happily in Hannibal's hands.

"You spoil me,"

“Not nearly enough,” Hannibal assured him, kissing Will’s cheek and lingering with a hum as he slid the flat of his hand down the fabric of his shirt, deliberately warming Will’s skin that way, rather than skin to skin. “I’d give you the world if you asked it of me.”

“Why?” Will let his eyes flick up to the ceiling in a semblance of innocent inquiry. He’d asked before. He just loved hearing the answer.

“Because I want to,” Hannibal replied obediently, slipping his fingers beneath the hem of his shirt to tease the V of Will’s hip. “Because it makes me happy to see you happy.”

Will couldn’t deny him that, of course. Who would he be if he tried?

Breakfast was cold by the time they got to it, but Will hardly minded. He enjoyed seeing Hannibal’s hair messed by his hands as much as Hannibal enjoyed seeing Will entirely undone by his hands and mouth and cock. Will sat in bed, one knee drawn up, the other leg tucked beneath him, Hannibal’s shirt hanging off one shoulder as he sipped his coffee and watched Hannibal dress for his day.

When Hannibal bent to kiss him, Will caught his tie and held him down for another.

“Will you join me at work today?” Hannibal murmured, smiling when Will bit his lip and shrugged, nonchalant.

“Perhaps.”

“Terrible thing,” Hannibal praised him, kissing the tip of Will’s nose before freeing his tie. “Learn well. I’ll be home before dinner.”

And so it went.

Will noticed that Hannibal began to cut down on some of his client visits, and preened knowing he was the reason. He liked the attention, he relished it. What’s more, he’d earned it. With every new step, be it a shuffle or a leap, he was growing stronger; he was making Hannibal proud.

It did make it very difficult for Hannibal to surprise him, though.

“What’s in the bags?” He asked, perched primly on the edge of their bed, Hannibal still in the doorway. He knew very well what was in the bags. He’d watched Hannibal deliberate over each and every one, easing Will’s path to his mind with the strength of his emotions.

Hannibal set the bag at the foot of the bed and leaned in to kiss him, his hands warm on Will’s cheeks. “I promised to spoil you,” he said when he pulled back.

“With *lace* ?”

“Awful boy,” Hannibal chided, reaching for the bag. “Surely we should have *some* secrets between us?”

Will shook his head, grinning. “You liked it. You made sure to run your fingers over every single thing to give me a texture to feel.”

“And did you?”

“Some of them,” Will said. “Not the blue one, though, so you should give me that one, first.”

So Hannibal did. He passed the intricately patterned garment to Will and watched the boy smile at him coyly as he stood from the bed and slipped past him to change in the bathroom. When he returned, Will was in nothing but the lingerie he’d been gifted, the blue almost electric against his pale skin as he cocked his hip and crossed his arms over his chest with a smile.

Hannibal hummed, pleased, and coaxed Will closer with a crooked finger.

“Beautiful thing,” Hannibal praised him as Will turned on the spot and ran his hands down his own body, feeling the softness of the fabric against his skin. “You know exactly what you do to me.”

“Sometimes,” Will replied, stepping close enough for Hannibal to cup his ass with both hands and tug him close for a kiss. Will draped his arms over Hannibal’s shoulders and allowed it before pulling back with a grin. “Wait here.”

He took the bags with the rest of his gifts and snagged one of Hannibal’s shirts from the hanger on the bathroom door.

The next half hour was a test in patience, for them both.

Will admired himself in the mirror before going to show Hannibal how he looked in his gifts, and Hannibal worshiped Will’s form with words and hands and kisses. He mouthed against the front of one pair of panties enough to have Will trembling, and chastised him for making a mess of his pretty things.

Will almost came then and there.

In the end, it was a set that undid both of them, a dark burgundy garter belt and stockings. No panties. Hannibal’s shirttails barely covered the top of Will’s thighs and when he was close enough he wrapped his arms around Hannibal’s shoulders and snared his legs around his middle and moaned into the kiss as Hannibal’s fingers sought to tease immediately between Will’s legs.

“Terrible, wanton thing,” Hannibal growled against Will’s lips. His fingers pressed deep inside him, curving to hit his prostate and making Will gasp. “You undo me.”

Will had no idea where his confidence had come from, but it was an intoxicating power. He ground down against Hannibal’s hand, demanding pleasure he now knew was his to take. “That’s the plan,” he gasped, dragging Hannibal into another kiss, this one wetter, messier.

They could have done just this for hours without complaint, but after so many weeks, Will had learned to be greedy.

“Want you inside of me,” he demanded, rocking in Hannibal’s lap.

Hannibal glanced over Will’s shoulder and grinned, a smile that could only mean trouble. He wrapped an arm around Will’s waist and lifted him, manhandling Will onto his stomach.

“Look up,” he murmured, pulling Will up onto his hands and knees. He’d turned Will to face the mirror, and the image was obscene.

As Will watched, Hannibal gently tugged his shirt off him, leaving Will in only his new gifts, on his knees, as Hannibal undressed behind him. Will looked. He bit his lip and tilted his head and grinned, and then he closed his eyes and looked at himself through Hannibal’s eyes, saw himself as the older man did - beautiful, tempting, remarkable.

It made Will shiver.

When Will was looking through his own eyes once more, he glanced back over his shoulder and arched his back, laughing when Hannibal bent to bite teasingly against his skin. Will loved every bruise and bite that Hannibal left on him, he touched them in the shower, thought about them when he moved through the park or the city. It fuelled his reach, allowed him to skim his fingers through trails as he passed them without being sucked in.

Now, he spread his knees a little wider and gasped when Hannibal knelt behind him and wrapped a warm wide palm over his throat to hold him still.

“Keep your eyes on yourself,” Hannibal purred, “I want you to see how beautiful you are when I take you apart.”

Will’s eyes met Hannibal’s in the mirror. They were dark with pleasure, narrowed as he released Will to undo his belt. When he finally, *finally* draped himself over Will’s back, Will was trembling with desire.

“Watch.” Hannibal’s hand cupped Will’s throat again, applying just enough pressure to keep his head up, to make him consciously aware of every breath he drew.

Hannibal eased into him in slow, teasing thrusts. Each movement jarred Will’s body, made his cock bob between his legs. He felt filthy like this, legs spread wide, cock swaying untouched and heavy beneath him. His fingers tightened on the blankets, voice pitching high as Hannibal finally settled deep inside him.

“I should have you always on display,” Hannibal told him, nuzzling their cheeks together. “Kept in bed in silks and satins. You’d be such a pretty, spoiled thing.”

It was a ludicrous fantasy, but Will moaned anyway. He wanted to be kept, any way he could. He wanted Hannibal’s hands on his skin.

“Don’t touch yourself,” Hannibal commanded, one hand curving around Will’s hip to guide him as he began to move.

Will obeyed. He kept his eyes on their reflections and he held still and didn’t touch and he *moaned* . Hannibal fucked into him slowly, a deep and intimate claiming as he continued to

whisper against Will's ear all the things he wanted for him, all the things he wished he could do.

Will felt adored. He felt wanted. He felt worthy.

When his orgasm threatened to overcome him, Hannibal nuzzled beneath his jaw and kissed there, stilling his body, keeping Will filled with him as he waited for his boy to calm down, to reclaim his breathing again. Will's cock was leaking onto the bed, steady thick droplets of precome. Will's fingers clutched the sheets so hard his knuckles were white.

"Harder," he whispered, turning his face enough to catch an awkward kiss against the corner of his mouth. "Harder, Hannibal, please… I want you to take me."

"I've got you."

"Show me," Will groaned. Hannibal kissed his cheek and guided his chin forward to look to the mirror again. Will caught Hannibal's eyes in their reflections and bit his lip, eyelids fluttering as Hannibal pulled back and thrust in faster, harder, deeper than before.

"God," Will moaned, shivering, arching back to meet him. "God that's good, Hannibal, *yes* ."

Hannibal moved in him roughly, overwhelming him. Will could barely hold himself up, kept in place solely by Hannibal's hands on him.

When Will's release threatened to overwhelm him once more, Hannibal slowed again, soothing Will's whine of complaint with soft kisses along his jaw.

"One more time," Hannibal said, his movements slow, but deep. He filled Will in steady strokes, teasing him until he began to rock back in desperation. "Just once more, sweet boy."

"Please."

With a wicked smile, Hannibal braced a hand in between Will's shoulderblades. He shoved him down into the bedding, tilting him to be sure he still faced the mirror as Hannibal began to fuck him, rough, brutal. Will cried out, shaking as Hannibal tormented his prostate.

"There," Will gasped. "Like that, Hannibal, oh god."

This time, Hannibal didn't stop. He took Will to his edge and over it, praising him and touching him until his pleasure, too, came like a wave and filled Will up. After, Hannibal gently guided Will's legs to stretch out and lay half on and half off him, stroking up and down Will's back as he kissed his smiling mouth.

"Now you'll drive me to distraction far more often," Hannibal sighed, attempting to sound put upon. Will grinned.

"Good."

In truth, outside of play, Will continued to work hard at his magical education. When Hannibal pushed him harder, challenging Will to bring back olfactory memories from his

trails as well, Will dedicated himself to the task. He attempted to implement such challenges on himself when he worked with his familiars, but since they technically weren't leaving trails for him to follow, all he could do was look and see.

Often, Hannibal would come home to find Will deep in his books of history, settled in the library with a raven on his shoulder, another on his drawn up knee and a third on the back of the couch. One would always alight to Hannibal's shoulder when he entered the house, as though Will were reaching out by proxy to welcome him home.

When Will started gently prodding Hannibal to show more of his own magic, the doctor pointed out, amused, that he'd never been hiding it. His telekinesis was almost too subtle to notice, but once Will started to look he couldn't miss it. Items that were just out of reach would always appear nearby, a glass of wine would refill itself without the man having to get up, several complicated recipes could be worked on simultaneously despite the man having only two hands. When he sat at the harpsichord, he played pieces written for two players.

Some mornings Will would turn to Hannibal and kiss him awake, grinning when he rolled back to his other side to find a flower on his pillow, or a cup of coffee Hannibal hadn't gotten up to make on the bedside table.

"It comes so easily to you," he said once. "It never seems to exhaust you."

"The benefit of age," Hannibal reminded him. Will made a face.

"You aren't *that* much older than me," he protested, though in truth, he and Hannibal had a couple of decades between the two of them.

"Practice," Hannibal prompted.

Will learned to follow trails left by other emotions, sorrow, anger, joy. He avoided trails of fear creeping black through his vision. Once, months after he'd begun following Hannibal to work, he reached out for a pen on Hannibal's desk and found it in his hands in their bedroom at home.

Will stared at the pen, tilting it back and forth as though it might somehow vanish once more. When it didn't, he laughed, disbelieving. Reaching for Hannibal once more, he indulged his curiosity. Anything heavier than the pen was out, but soon, Will had a collection of paperclips and rubber bands gathered in front of him. He was beaming, ear-to-ear, when the phone finally rang.

"I'm sorry?" He offered, in lieu of a greeting. Hannibal's voice was warm, amused.

"As much as I am proud of you for making advances, perhaps you could leave my office supplies alone for the rest of the day? I'm running short."

"I'd put them back but I honestly don't know how."

Hannibal just hummed, and Will could feel the smile in the sound. "Practice," he predictably told him, and hung up the phone.

By the time he got home, Will hadn't managed to return anything, but he'd bagged up his stolen fare for the doctor to take back with him when he returned to the office.

"One would think you have magpies rather than ravens for familiars," Hannibal told him, kissing Will's forehead. Will just shrugged, aiming for helpless and landing in the vicinity of smug and guilty. The raven on Hannibal's shoulder fluffed its feathers and took wing, choosing to pace the top of the large bookcase in the study for a while.

It took Will a few months more before he managed to figure out how to return the items he could now take with him. That took a lot more energy than taking them in the first place, and he didn't want to think too deeply about that. He knew he would have to, at some point, but just then ignorance suited him fine. Equivalent exchange. Maybe he used the slipstream of Hannibal's own energy when he *took* the items but only his own when he *returned* them.

It didn't much matter, not then, anyway.

It was rare that Will took anything, he enjoyed more the aspect of being able to see through another's eyes and experience what they experienced. If he was still riding high from a thorough morning fucking, he could feel Hannibal's emotions through the trail he tracked. He could feel the heat of the coffee through the mug Hannibal held, or the texture of someone's skin as Hannibal touched them.

The sensation of curling up *inside* Hannibal was one Will couldn't resist. He reached for him in every waking moment, even if he could hear Hannibal just down the hall.

It was not until he began to reach for Hannibal in his sleep as well, that it became a problem.

Flashes, at first, thoughts and feelings that might have been dreams. Might instead have been nightmares. And then-

He's stalking his prey down a quiet street. He hasn't been out in too long, far too long. Home is wonderful with its beauty and temptation, but this, ***this*** *he has missed.*

His prey begs. It babbles and cries and he barely hears a word. It may as well not be speech at all, coming from such a pig.

Hands first. The knife can come later, when it's time to butcher. Hands are intimate, hands let him feel life slipping through his fingers. His prey goes red, then purple, then ashy grey, and he feels so ***alive*** *.*

Will woke alone in their bed, gasping and panting.

Hannibal wasn't in it with him.

Hannibal wasn't even in the house.

Will shoved himself up and out of bed and moved to the bathroom, splashing water on his face and cupping his hand beneath the tap to drink some down as well. When one of his familiars settled on the counter beside him, Will shook his head.

“What the fuck was that?”

“See.”

“Yeah I did fucking see, but *what* did I see?”

“Him.” came the reply. Will cursed again and turned the tap off, snatching up a towel to dry his face.

“No, just a nightmare. Just a freaking nightmare.”

“No.”

Will glared at the bird before turning the light off and returning to the bedroom - still tellingly empty. Another raven was pacing the bed, leaving its footprints in the sheets. A third sat by the window.

“Is one of you with him?”

“No.”

“Can you be?”

“Can we be?” the three echoed back at him and Will wanted to throttle them. The fourth appeared presently and sat heavy on Will’s shoulder, claws gentle against his bare skin. Absently, Will moved his hand up to stroke his feathers.

Surely he’d just been dreaming. Just because Will could now stretch his magic out far and wide and deep didn’t mean that everything he saw in his mind’s eye was something that was actually happening. He still dreamed, didn’t he?

Will swallowed and reached out with his hand, seeking for the telltale tickle of Hannibal’s trail. He rarely had to actually *reach* anymore, but feeling it there was reassuring. He could look, could immediately tamp his panic down by proving to himself that what he saw wasn’t real. He could, but he found he absolutely could not. It was as though he were frozen in place, unable, *unwilling* , to look again.

“See,” spoke the raven on his shoulder. “See?”

Sometimes, all one needs is to be seen, and understood, for a monster to become a man again.

“Look,” the ravens insisted. “See.”

He knew. He knew what he would see. Terror simmered within him, bubbling over into anger.

Will reached. He *saw* . Awake, and alert, he knew. He understood.

“I see,” he told the birds, who cawed in response. Turning towards the one on his shoulder, he swallowed They were *his* familiars, weren’t they? They did as *he* commanded, or they were

meant to. “Go to him,” he forced himself to say. “Tell him to come home. *Now* .”

“Now,” the raven echoed, and vanished, leaving Will feeling light and lightheaded.

The other three stared at him. Will sighed and reached for the bathrobe he rarely wore. There would be no more sleep tonight. He and Hannibal would need to talk. To reach an understanding.

But first, Will was going to *kill* him.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

> *Hannibal sighed. "I apologize that the first time you saw me hunting had to be so… jarring."*
>
> *"The first time?"*
>
> *"Will, we should sit down."*
>
> *"Hannibal you* killed someone."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal had not expected the corvid to appear on his shoulder. Usually he was well within the vicinity of his home before one of Will's familiars showed up to greet him. As it were, he cursed softly and drew the back of his wrist over his forehead with a sigh. The bird said nothing for a time, just looked down at what Hannibal was doing. Then it tilted his head.

"Come home."

"Tell him to go back to bed," Hannibal offered gently.

The raven nipped hard enough to draw blood from Hannibal's earlobe. "Now." it emphasized.

"I'm otherwise occupied."

"Now," the raven repeated, tapping a warning against Hannibal's neck. The doctor let out a long deliberate breath and shrugged his shoulder to coax the raven away. " *Now, Hannibal* ."

And that sounded like Will, the bird offered an eerily accurate facsimile of his voice and Hannibal paused in his work. A part of him couldn't fault Will his tenacity and perseverance, he had encouraged it after all. Another part was livid with himself for letting Will so close, for allowing him to slip into his mind and not building up the walls Hannibal usually had ready for anyone else.

He would not be able to finish the artwork he'd envisioned. He was fortunate that Will had not interrupted a particularly desired acquisition. It would not have made him particularly charitable towards his lover.

It seemed, however, that his lover was not feeling particularly charitable towards *him* . Will met him at the door in a flurry of feathers, a raven on his shoulders, three others watching

from the stairs. Will's eyes were a storm, his gaze stern. Hannibal had barely closed the door behind him before Will was moving, standing mere feet from Hannibal with his arms crossed and his lips a thin line.

"What," he growled, "the *hell* , Hannibal?"

Hannibal had imagined this moment from the very beginning. He had always wanted to bring Will into the shadows with him, to teach Will everything that made Hannibal who he was.

He found, now that the time had come, that he was entirely speechless.

Will glowered at him, utterly unimpressed. "What," reiterated one raven gleefully, "the *hell."*

"Have you learned to speak through them as well now?" Hannibal asked, aiming for amicable. The bird on Will's shoulder disappeared, leaving just the three on the stairs, one preening himself and another tilting his head back and forth, as a dog might. The third just watched.

Hannibal sighed. "I apologize that the first time you saw me hunting had to be so… jarring."

"The first time?"

"Will, we should sit down."

"Hannibal you *killed someone."*

"Yes," Hannibal admitted, holding up his palms, trying to placate the fiery beautiful boy before him. "And I've done so before. Please, let us sit and I'll explain as much as I can."

"How about everything?"

"I don't know everything," Hannibal told him honestly. "But what I do know, I will tell you. Please."

Will continued glaring at Hannibal a moment more before turning away, hands pressing to his face to keep them from shaking. He had no idea what to do. What would anyone in their right mind do? He should call the police, ask for the magical division, report seeing a murder through the eyes of the murderer and -

And what? Lose his mentor to prison? Lose his lover to betrayal made in haste and anger?

Will couldn't imagine a *good* reason for murder but he couldn't bring himself to bring authorities into this. Not after what they'd shared, not after the trust they'd started to build. With a deep sigh, Will looked over his shoulder and then moved off towards the kitchen, indicating that Hannibal should follow, if he *insisted* that Will sit down.

Will settled in on a stool at the kitchen island, glowering when Hannibal attempted to join him. He was prickly in a way Hannibal had never known him to be, but his ferocity was a sight to behold.

Faced with no other option, Hannibal did what he always did when he felt lost- he began to cook.

“When I was a boy,” he began, “I believed I would not be magical at all. I was much younger than you, when I gave up on waiting, but I had other priorities in my life. I was the primary caregiver for my younger sister, Mischa.”

It was not a name Hannibal had mentioned before, but Will remembered it from flashes of dreams stolen in the night. He’d heard it screamed through a storm, and he shivered as though he could feel the snow on his skin.

“Mischa would have had one of the strongest gifts I’ve ever known. By the time she was two, she could reach for something across the room, and find it in her hands.”

Telekinesis. The same type Hannibal had always demonstrated. Will’s chest tightened.

“I adored her,” Hannibal continued. “I would have seen her trained by the brightest tutors we could afford. But the winter she turned five was a harsh, unforgiving thing. Food was scarce, even for us, and we had never wanted for anything.”

Will couldn’t even swallow, his throat was so tight. He couldn’t believe that Hannibal would do such a thing, that Hannibal was capable -

“Those who had even less, grew desperate. Often, they would merely steal. Incapacitate, perhaps, but never outright slaughter. Not until that winter, when there was genuinely nothing left at all.”

Will could feel himself trembling. Hannibal’s memories opened themselves up to Will like a gaping maw and he didn’t want to look in; for the first time in their time together Will didn’t want to see. One of his ravens appeared with a flutter on his knee and Will slipped his fingers over the bird’s feathers.

“A group of men took her and I hostage, determined to get a ransom for us. But in their struggle to claim us, they killed the only two people who could have ever paid it.” Hannibal shrugged, as though trying to shake off a creeping sensation, and when he stilled again another of Will’s familiars landed whisper silent to his shoulder. Hannibal sighed.

“We starved. I did all I could, but she was frail, small. She got ill. We hadn’t the supplies to heal her, and the group had no need for dead weight so -”

“Stop.”

Hannibal turned and looked at Will carefully, the young man was staring into the middle distance, his brows furrowed, his cheeks pink with distress.

“They ate her,” he whispered. His voice cracked as he spoke a little louder. “She was just a little girl, and they…”

“They fed me scraps,” Hannibal said gently. “I didn’t realize what they had done until…”

“Until you reached for something and it came,” Will whispered. “That’s your gift. You absorb.”

“I was small,” Hannibal reminded him, “barely eleven years old. I did not know how to handle the revelation, the anger that came with it. I *reached* , and the weapon was in my hand, and I remember very little else, except…”

Hannibal turned back to the stove, the burner lit with a small flame. He reached out, and the flame surged higher.

“One of them had magic of his own,” Hannibal told him, “And it was so very cold.”

Will made a helpless sound and wrapped his arms around himself. His raven flapped its wings just enough to be able to perch on the bench next to him instead of his knee and leaned in to gently preen Will’s curls into order. For several moments neither spoke. Then Will swallowed and drew a hand over his face, over his mouth.

“What happened then?” he asked. Hannibal ducked his head.

“I don’t recall a lot. I didn’t speak for many years, unable to communicate in any way beyond what Mischa’s power allowed me to do. An uncle on my father’s side found me in an orphanage and took me away.”

Will waited. He knew there was more that Hannibal was not telling him, knew that once he finished making the swiftly thrown together pancakes he would have nowhere to escape from Will’s curiosity.

“We are but vessels, Will, we carry what we are given. But we are finite, we overflow. I honed Mischa’s magic within me, but I did not hold to that of the man who had killed her, so after a time, I no longer possessed the abilities I had absorbed from him.”

“So you… you went looking -”

“I was unlucky enough to be found, I’m afraid,” Hannibal countered. “I merely defended myself.”

Will pressed his fingers to the bridge of his nose and hummed, a sound pitched and shaky. He could understand the panic, the desperation, the cruelty of circumstance that drove Hannibal to hone his acquired powers in the first place. He could understand fighting for his life. But why -

“Why more?” Will asked him quietly. “Why do you hunt now? What do you want?”

“Nothing,” Hannibal admitted, setting his hands to the counter and looking at Will, trying to catch his eye. “But without fuel even the magic I’ve honed will slip through my fingers like water. In a way, I suppose I sacrifice to it. To her. An endless avenging.”

“It’s all you have of her.” Will met Hannibal’s eyes and saw pain there, old and well-tended.

“It is,” Hannibal said quietly, “And I will not lose it.”

“You should have told me.”

“What should I have said?” Will had no answer to that. Hannibal reached for his hand, breathing a sigh of relief when Will allowed it to be taken. “Besides,” Hannibal added gently, “didn’t you know?”

His eyes flicked pointedly to the ravens. Will hadn’t known, he was certain, not the details.

But he’d known *something* . He’d felt something, something dark and aching, something that slipped into his dreams and lingered inside him.

Will sighed, turning his hand to catch Hannibal’s. His thumb rubbed circles against the back of Hannibal’s hand, soft, slow.

“I won’t help you,” he warned.

“Won’t,” a raven said, but it seemed to Will it was more of a question, this time.

“I *won’t* help you,” Will insisted. “But I won’t ask you to stop. I’ll only ask you not to get caught.”

Hannibal looked at him for a long while, not staring Will down so much as taking him in, and then he bent to bring Will’s hand to his lips and kiss his knuckles in silent thanks. Will squeezed Hannibal’s fingers and slipped his hand free. He excused himself to go upstairs, taking them slowly, taking his time, and Hannibal allowed him the space without following.

“See,” the raven commented quietly, walking closer to Hannibal and ducking his head for the man to pet it.

“Yes, I believe he did,” Hannibal agreed. “Remarkable boy.”

The next day was predictably awkward. Will did his best for it not to be but the harder he tried the more awkward he felt, so in the end he just sequestered himself in the library and read, surrounded by his familiars.

He did reach out for Hannibal, however, every so often, seeking for him in the house. Will was unused to working with negative emotions as his fuel, he wasn’t as strong with them, and while he could find Hannibal and figure out where he was, he couldn’t touch, or hear, or smell anything through the trail.

In the evening, he curled up against Hannibal in bed and closed his eyes, offering his trust in the most quiet, intimate way he knew how.

When Hannibal was next at work, Will returned to his practice. He didn’t steal things from Hannibal’s desk anymore, he allowed the man to work undisturbed and merely read him, identifying every sensation and emotion he could, cataloguing silently. When Hannibal went on his rounds, Will listened, he looked. As Hannibal passed a door that seemed interesting, Will ached to turn back and look at it and -

-slowly, almost mechanically, Hannibal *did* .

A moment. Just a moment, where Hannibal was still and staring at the door.

Open it , Will thought, suddenly giddy, lightheaded with it. Hannibal reached out, and-

The connection snapped, so suddenly that it *hurt* . Will found himself staring up at the ceiling, exhausted down to the bone. He'd slumped in the chair in the study, and he could not seem to make himself get back up.

A violation, that's what it had been, and this was his punishment. Will closed his eyes, drawing in slow breaths. He would practice that again, but on someone else, and from the comfort of his bed.

He was still in the chair when Hannibal returned, hours early, though he'd managed to straighten just a bit. Hannibal's brow furrowed in concern when he saw him.

"Sorry," Will mumbled. "I didn't know I could… It just happened."

"You've worn yourself out, sweet boy," Hannibal said, hoisting Will up into his arms as if Will weighed nothing. Will laughed, tucking his face into Hannibal's chest.

"Worth it to know."

Hannibal carried Will upstairs to bed and lay him out on the covers. With a hum, he checked Will's pulse, his temperature, ignoring the way Will snorted and tried to squirm away. He was well, in truth, just exhausted. Hannibal had a tendency to simultaneously attack and defend his mind when someone intruded upon it and he'd hit Will harder than he'd expected to.

"I didn't mean to hurt you," Hannibal apologized, kneeling by the bed to look at Will. The boy offered a smile back.

"I didn't mean to take the wheel. Never done that before."

"Magic shows itself in mysterious ways," Hannibal reminded him, and when Will laughed, Hannibal's expression eased from its tension also. "How did it feel?"

Will licked his lips. "Odd," he admitted. "Almost as though I was playing a video game."

"I heard your voice in my head," Hannibal admitted, stroking Will's face as he stood up and moved to sit on the bed instead. "I felt a sudden, desperate need to look at that door and open it. I've never felt so out of control." Hannibal turned his hand, knuckles soft over Will's cheekbones. "You're incredibly powerful."

Will looked away then. He didn't want that kind of power. He didn't know what to do with it. What could he possibly do with it but hurt people? As though sensing his panic, Hannibal eased himself into repose next to his boy and gathered Will close.

"You're overthinking."

"Hard not to."

“It is a power to hone as any other.”

“It’s manipulative.”

“It needn’t be.” Hannibal pointed out, offering Will a soft look when the other sighed. “Don’t overthink it. It happened, you learned.”

“I won’t do it again,” Will promised.

“I’d rather you did,” Hannibal said. At Will’s concerned look, he tugged him close enough to place a kiss against his temple. “Not without warning, perhaps. But together, in the evenings. So that you might extract yourself without damage should you try again.”

“It feels wrong, to crawl around in your head like that,” Will admitted. “Not at all like tagging along. I felt disgusted with myself when I was done.”

“All magic can be destructive, if not honed,” Hannibal reminded him. “Perhaps there is no situation where you might need such a gift. Or perhaps there is, and when the time comes, you will destroy yourself trying to master a power you’ve never tamed.”

Will groaned, turning his face into Hannibal’s shoulder. “Thanks, professor,” he grumbled. “You sound like my textbooks.”

“Are the textbooks wrong?”

“You know they aren’t,” Will said, “you bought them.”

“Perhaps next time you might ride along in my mind and select a book yourself.”

“Now *you’re* being manipulative.”

“Am I? Is it working?”

Will shoved him playfully, grinning when Hannibal remained immoveable above him. Then he spread his hands over Hannibal’s chest, innocent touches for the moment, just feeling his pulse, the warmth of his body against him.

“If you weren’t already damn near telepathic when we had sex, I’d try it then,” Will snarked. “But you’ve never left me unsatisfied yet, and there’s no reason to fix what ain’t broken.”

Hannibal hummed, and slowly moved to press Will to the bed beneath him. Will squirmed, laughing, and wrapped his arms around Hannibal’s shoulders, their foreheads pressed together.

“Don’t tell me you want me to.”

“I wouldn’t be averse,” Hannibal replied, eyes narrowed, pleased. “Who knows their body’s pleasures better than you?”

Will's smile eased a moment into something a little more serious. "Do you really want me to?"

"I don't want to push you into anything you feel uncomfortable confronting," Hannibal reminded him. "However, that is probably the safest scenario in which to try to stretch your potential. Even in the kitchen I could burn myself if your instructions aren't clear."

A flush settled over Will's cheeks. There were very few cons. If he weakened himself, he would already be in bed. If he failed, no one would get hurt. And arousal was still the easiest focus for his magic to follow.

"You like taking charge," Will reminded him.

"Then perhaps I'll fight you," Hannibal suggested. "A challenge for you to overcome. Or perhaps I'll take advantage of you in your weakened state."

Will laughed, passing a hand over his face and then pushing it up through his hair. "You could never take advantage of me," he said, "but you're welcome to try."

Mischief glinted in Hannibal's eyes. He found the tendon in Will's throat and grazed his teeth over it, leaving a trail of bite marks down pale skin. Beneath him, Will arched with a gasp.

But Hannibal went no further, despite Will's squirming. He stayed perfectly polite, lips above Will's collar, hands beside him on the bed. Will glared up at the ceiling.

" *Fine* ," he growled.

And then he was looking down at himself, petulant and needy. He'd worn slacks and a shirt, but underneath he'd worn a pair of panties, intending to surprise Hannibal when he got home.

Take off my shirt , he thought, pushing fiercely at the barrier between himself and Hannibal.

He felt the resistance, and after a moment adjusted his tactic. He hadn't the strength to spar with Hannibal this way, but he could possibly get around direct commands with subtle suggestion.

Commanding his own body when his mind was elsewhere proved a whole new challenge Will hadn't expected, so for a few moments he awkwardly shifted between himself and Hannibal before just cursing softly and tugging Hannibal's tie enough to kiss him. Hannibal hummed, amused, and cupped Will's cheek as he opened to the kiss. And as Will drew up his knees to frame him he sent the thought through again.

This time, Hannibal moved leisurely, catching the hem of Will's shirt and tugging it up until it caught beneath Will's arms. Will laughed, breaking the kiss and wriggling to let Hannibal pull the garment off entirely. Will grinned.

Don't kiss me.

He parted his lips as the doctor leaned nearer and smiled when, with a soft sound of consideration, turned to nuzzle Will instead.

It was a strange sensation, and Will could only guess at how much Hannibal was letting him think he was getting away with. He bit his lip and tried to ask for something they didn't often play with, but that wasn't out of the realm of possibility.

Hold me down.

Hannibal's hands found his wrists, pulling them up to pin above his head. He could do it with just one hand, and Will couldn't help but laugh. Hannibal had him pinned, firmly, securely, and yet *he* was the one in charge.

Don't let me go.

Will tugged once at his wrists, just to test. Hannibal kissed him again, the old command having dissipated in favor of the new. He licked his way into Will's mouth, grinding down against him. Will could feel him hard in his slacks, pressing firmly against Will's own aching erection.

"Oh *fuck!"*

Fuck me fuck me fuck me-

It was the wrong instruction. Hannibal flipped Will onto his belly and tugged his slacks down, rutting against Will's backside, and Will had only seconds to realize how he'd screwed up before-

"Perhaps a little more detail," Hannibal whispered in Will's ear, his voice gentle and teasing. Will relaxed, relieved to hear him in control of himself.

Get the lube , he tried, feeling slightly less confident.

Hannibal obeyed, kissing over Will's cheek, nuzzling his hair. "You should hear yourself as I hear you," Hannibal murmured. "Commanding, proud, powerful boy."

"Fuck," Will laughed, arching up and back, spreading his legs. When Hannibal leaned back to look at him he paused, before bending down to nuzzle against the intricate fabric covering Will's ass. Will purred, pleased. He knew how Hannibal liked looking at him when he was in lingerie, he felt powerful knowing he made Hannibal so hungry for him.

"Am I powerful?" Will asked, teasing. *Don't take them off.* "I'd think I was akin to a mosquito buzzing in your ear." *Tease me through them. Get me ready.*

"I'm addicted to you already," Hannibal reminded him, as his hands slipped down to squeeze Will's ass through his panties, thumbs slipping beneath the hem. "There's very little I wouldn't do for you."

"Flatterer," Will groaned, stretching his arms out in front of himself like a cat, fingers spread. "It might go to my head."

“I hope it does.”

Fingers, Hannibal, now.

Hannibal tugged the scrap of lacy fabric to the side, baring Will without removing the panties. He slid two fingers in without hesitation, curving them to seek out Will’s prostate.

Will whined even before he found it, pressing his forehead to the sheets and gasping quietly. Hannibal’s fingers were clever and thick, just enough of a challenge to leave him aching for more.

Another . Harder.

“I like you like this,” Hannibal murmured, tucking a third finger against the other two. “Demanding, taking what is rightfully yours.”

Will groaned as Hannibal fucked him with his fingers, each thrust rocking Will’s body on the bed. The bed creaked with their motions, and Will reached out, sinking fully into Hannibal's head.

He could feel Hannibal’s fingers in him. He could feel himself around Hannibal’s fingers. Will strained at the connection, struggling to move Hannibal as he liked.

Lube lube lube fuck me fuck me fuck-

Hannibal draped over Will’s back. Will fell back into himself just in time to feel the head of Hannibal’s cock catch against his rim.

“God, yes, Hannibal, yes,” Will arched up, feeling the stretch of the fabric against his hips, the stretch of his body taking Hannibal in. Perhaps another time, next time, he would attempt to continue commanding, perhaps, another time, next time, he would slip into Hannibal’s mind and feel himself from the outside in. But right then, Will wanted to enjoy himself as himself.

Hannibal certainly let him.

He kissed over Will’s jaw, his cheek, the corner of his eye. He wrapped a hand around Will’s throat and arched him up, whispering to him how beautiful he was, how demanding, how strong. He changed the speed of his thrusting, slowing down, rolling his entire body over Will, covering him, fitting himself deep and tight in his body.

“Hannibal, please,” Will groaned, knees slipping wider apart, body shaking.

Make me come first, then do it again, I want to feel you take me apart -

It was less a command and more a request, but Hannibal moved as though Will had complete control over him. He reached between Will’s thighs, letting Will thrust into his hand with a desperate eagerness.

Will spilled over the sheets with a keening cry, eyes squeezed shut against the onslaught of sensations. Hannibal layered kisses over the nape of his neck, fucking him through his release, into that heightened place where pleasure ached.

Will lost words, silent or otherwise. He stopped trying to command Hannibal, clinging to the sheets as Hannibal overwhelmed him in every way.

In the end, Hannibal made Will come once more and brought him *very* near a third before he found his own release, collapsing atop Will's trembling form.

"Beautiful, clever boy," Hannibal praised, brushing curls from Will's face.

Will believed him in that moment, grinning into the sheets and sighing when Hannibal lay half on and half off him. He was clever, and he would get better at it. And he was beautiful, because Hannibal looked at him like Will had hung the stars.

"I'll get better," Will promised him, words slurred and warm with sleep and sex. "Then you won't be able to resist me at all."

Hannibal nuzzled him and kissed Will's cheek, a lingering, loving thing.

"I can barely do so now," he reminded Will. "You are a force to be reckoned with, Will Graham."

Will slipped their fingers together and gently squeezed Hannibal's hand. "Then walk beside me. Watch me grow."

"Wherever you lead," Hannibal promised him.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you guys so much for reading and enjoying this story with us, we loved it so much!

End Notes

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